



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: February 4, 2020

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Transportation Planning & Parking, Public Works Department

SUBJECT: Resolution In Support Of Multi-Use Path And Crosswalks Along Cliff Drive

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council adopt, by reading of title only, a Resolution of the Council of the City of Santa Barbara Supporting a Multi-Use Path and Crosswalks Along Cliff Drive, and to Direct Staff to Apply for a Grant to Fund Design, Environmental Review, and Construction.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Staff have been working with the community to develop plans to improve safety and improve facilities for all modes of transportation along Cliff Drive. Council's resolution of support will address many of the residents' concerns for Cliff Drive from Castillo Street to Las Positas Road.

The proposed safety enhancements will transform the corridor with the addition of a two way separated multi-use path (Class 4 bike path), seven (7) enhanced pedestrian crosswalks with pedestrian activated flashers, three new traffic signals, and stronger connections from to the path to nearby schools.

DISCUSSION:

Background

Prior to December 2013, Cliff Drive was part of Caltrans' State Route 225 (SR 225), which was a seven mile urban route looping south from Highway 101 in Santa Barbara. The state route followed Las Positas Road, south from Highway 101, along Cliff Drive to Montecito Street, where it then looped back to Highway 101 along Castillo Street.

In 2011, while SR 225 was still under Caltrans control, the community requested that Cliff Drive be re-stripped to reduce it to one lane each direction between Meigs Road and Loma Alta Drive to reduce excess vehicle speed and collisions, improve driveway access for residents, shorten pedestrian crossings, and add bike lanes. In August 2011, Caltrans applied the restriped road after a pavement maintenance project.

In December 2013, at the urging of the community, SR 225 was relinquished from Caltrans to the City of Santa Barbara. This relinquishment opened the door for future City modifications to the roadway to make it more compatible with the community. In spring 2017, a roundabout at the intersection of Las Positas and Cliff Drive was constructed. This project significantly reduced traffic delay at the intersection. A 2.6-mile-long multiuse path along Las Positas and Modoc Roads will be under construction in 2020. The Multiuse Path will be a major regional and local connector for area schools, Elings Park, and Arroyo Burro Beach.

While the above-mentioned capital projects are major improvements to vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation along the Las Positas Road corridor, resident desired safety and mobility improvements to Cliff Drive have not been addressed. Calls for improvements have been echoed by many area residents and Mesa neighborhood organizations during these capital planning efforts, and are reflected in the Council adopted Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (most recent version is 2020-2024); the Bicycle Master Plan (2016), where the community requested a Class 4 bike lane along Cliff Drive that is separated from vehicular traffic; and the 2018 Vision Zero Strategy, where Council prioritized Cliff Drive as one of the high priority corridors in the City for collision reduction efforts.

Public Outreach and Project Development

The community's desire for changes to Cliff Drive was the primary reason for the relinquishment of SR 225 from Caltrans to the City in 2013. Since 2013, the City has received a lot of feedback and requests for operational changes to Cliff Drive. The most frequent requests include the desire for safer cycling facilities, safer and more frequent pedestrian crosswalks, and safer traffic operations near Santa Barbara City College (SBCC). A lack of funding has prevented the City from delivering these changes.

The California Active Transportation Program will have a call for projects in the spring of 2020. This funding program provides the best opportunity to deliver community desired changes to Cliff Drive.

Throughout 2019, City staff has held numerous public outreach efforts and workshops to develop a project that could be put forward for funding consideration through the Active Transportation Program. A list of the public outreach efforts are attached in Attachment 1.

Staff presented various styles of cycling facilities and crosswalks that have been installed in Santa Barbara and other cities to the community for feedback. Staff received a very strong indication from the community that the Cliff Drive corridor should include:

- A two-way bike path along the south side of Cliff Drive from Arroyo Burro County Park past SBCC to Castillo Street.
- Frequent pedestrian crossings equipped with pedestrian activated flashers that provide good neighborhood connectivity.

- Safer intersections for all users along Cliff Drive at Camino Calma, SBCC West Campus, and SBCC East Campus.
- Safe connections from the path to nearby schools (Monroe, Washington, McKinley).
- Safety improvements that address the repeat collision patterns along Cliff Drive (Vision Zero).

Attachment 2 shows a summary illustration of community desired features.

With this feedback, staff analyzed corridor conditions, collision patterns (Attachment 3 – Heat Map of Collisions along Cliff Drive) and developed a conceptual design. This conceptual design was presented to the public at a public meeting and is available on the City’s website. Stakeholder meetings were also held.

Roundabout feasibility analyses were performed for Cliff Drive at Mesa Lane and Flora Vista, SBCC West Campus, and Loma Alta and the SBCC East Campus. Based on the amount of room required to build roundabouts, roundabouts are not feasible at any of the above locations. This information was shared with the public and stakeholders.

Based on the comments received through the public outreach process, there is strong community support for moving forward with a grant application to pursue design, environmental, and construction funding for these safety improvements.

Safety Improvements - Benefits and Tradeoffs

The main benefit is improved cycling and pedestrian mobility for the Mesa Neighborhood. The multi-use path (class 4 bike path) will also benefit the region as a whole by completing a major gap in the Coastal Bike Route. Attachment 4 illustrates how this bike path fits within the regional Coastal Bike Route.

The multi-use class 4 bike path will be approximately three miles long, and is expected to be used by recreational cyclists, skateboarders, rollerbladers, and other active transportation users. More aggressive cyclists will likely ride with traffic on the street, similar to Cabrillo Boulevard.

The conceptual design includes seven new pedestrian crosswalks across Cliff Drive, which will be located near bus stops and major entry points into the neighborhood. All of the crosswalks would be equipped with pedestrian activated flashers.

In addition to seven new pedestrian crosswalks across Cliff Drive, three new traffic signals are proposed to provide safe pathway operations at the intersections of Cliff Drive and Camino Calma, Cliff Drive and SBCC West Campus, and Cliff Drive and SBCC East Campus. The traffic signals at SBCC will also address traffic operational concerns brought up by SBCC.

Based on public feedback through the outreach process, several features off Cliff Drive are proposed to be included in the grant application that will enhance access to schools and parks, including:

- A new crosswalk at Shoreline Drive and Salida Del Sol that would enhance access to Washington Elementary School, and from the neighborhood to La Mesa Park.
- Sidewalk infill, sidewalk widening, and an enhanced crosswalk on Red Rose Way and Flora Vista Drive, to enhance access to Monroe Elementary.
- Sidewalk widening on Loma Alta to accommodate safer access to McKinley Elementary.

There will be tradeoffs with these safety enhancements, and those tradeoffs were discussed with the community. The tradeoffs include:

- More crosswalks and traffic signals along Cliff Drive will increase the number of stops that drivers will have to make. This will increase end to end travel time and change the character of the corridor. The community understood this tradeoff, and supported the change in character and the lower vehicle operating speeds that will likely take place.
- Three parking spaces will have to be removed on the south side of Cliff Drive between Cooper and Mohawk Roads. Due to the sequence of the traffic signals at Cliff Drive and Mesa Lane and Flora Vista, two lanes in each direction should be maintained for intersection capacity reasons. In order to provide room for the traffic lanes and the pathway, these three parking spaces will have to be removed. The parking spaces can only be preserved by reducing the number of traffic lanes, which will cause queues in excess of 800-feet during peak hours. Further study and refinement can take place during detailed design, but to date, no alternative to parking removal has been identified.
- The pathway will cross side streets on raised crossings (see Attachment 5 for an illustration of a raised crossing). Two-way pathways can present unique traffic safety issues where side streets cross the pathway. To provide safe crossings, raised crossings will be utilized to improve visibility of pathway users, and slow traffic as it crosses the pathway.
- A raised median that prevents left turns from driveways between Camino Calma and Meigs Road is necessary. The medians are an essential safety feature; without the medians, this entire effort cannot move forward. The medians will address safety at the highest collision area of Cliff Drive as there is a repeating pattern of collisions along this block involving drivers turning left from driveways onto Cliff Drive. Introducing a multi-use path to an area with an existing collision pattern is not feasible without addressing the collision pattern. A series of short medians will restrict left turns onto Cliff Drive, but allow for left turns into some driveways to maintain access to businesses. U-turns will be allowed. The raised medians are illustrated in Attachment 6, Conceptual Plans of the Safety Improvements. The medians will result in increased demand in the eastbound Cliff Drive to northbound Meigs Road left turn lane. Some spillback will occur from the left turn lane into the through lanes. Staff will mitigate the spillback to the extent possible with traffic signal timing.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

The Engineering Division is developing the cost estimate for the safety improvements based on community feedback and in preparation for the grant application.

Applicants to the Active Transportation Program can increase the competitiveness of their applications by providing local funding for the project. Staff recommends a local funding contribution of \$250,000 to increase application competitiveness. To meet this local funding contribution, the cost of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access ramps that the City would otherwise be responsible for, and routine maintenance projects can be folded into the project and used as a local match contribution. These routine maintenance projects needed at the time of project construction include slurry sealing the street to relocate striping, and rehabilitation of the aging traffic signals at Mesa Lane and Flora Vista, and at Loma Alta.

If the grant application is successful, an additional traffic signal technician will be required to maintain the additional electronic assets associated with this corridor and upcoming projects where additional electronic assets are anticipated. The staffing request will be part of a future budget process.

If the funding application is successful, construction will likely take place in 2025, which is when the local match and additional position will be needed.

ENVIROMENTAL REVIEW:

If funding is received, the safety improvements will be designed and will undergo all required discretionary review, including environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act. If any federal funding is involved, the improvements will also require environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act.

- ATTACHMENTS:**
1. Public Outreach Summary
 2. Community Desired Safety Features
 3. Collision Heat Map
 4. Multiuse Bike Path Connection with the South Coast Santa Barbara County Coastal Bike Route
 5. Raised Crossing Illustration
 6. Safety Enhancements Concept Plan

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